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RABIES CONTROL ALONG THE BORDER AREAS OF SOUTH TEXAS.
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sity, Kingsville, TX 78363.

Today, wildlife comprise the most important reservoir of rabies for both humans and domestic animals in the U.S. Skunks, raccoons, and bats account for the majority of all reported cases. Raccoons are the primary vector for zoonoses in the southeastern U.S., and skunks in the Great Plains. The highest prevalence of rabies in America is reported along our border with Mexico. In 1988, an epizootic began in south Texas and concerned officials began a 3 part program to limit its spread by: educating the public about rabies, emphasizing the need for vaccinating pets, and eliminating strays. Staff of the Animal Damage Control (ADC) program of the USDA/APHIS at Kingsville, TX have called the outbreak the largest in south Texas since the 1920s. ADC has cooperated in a selective rabies vector depopulation program after areas with affected wildlife were identified. In 1991 and 1992, nearly 20,000 vertebrates were submitted to the Public Health Regions in Texas for immunofluorescence testing. They were generally symptomatic and had come into contact with humans or domestic animals. Rabies was diagnosed in 16% of the wildlife submitted. Positive rabies cases in the 1991 wildlife sample included: 43% (37/86) of the fox, 32% (209/651) of the skunks, and less than 5% of the raccoons and bats. Rabies in these species remained high in 1992, and the spread of the epizootic may have stabilized for fox 26% (32/121) and skunks 29% (182/624), but increased in coyotes 48% (70/145) and in bats 13% (69/513). This result may be due to the natural epizootiology of the particular strain of rabies interacting with the behavior and ecology of the vector, natural physiographic barriers, and the effectiveness of the control program.